

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory and two related bills

I would like to register my opposition to the proposed Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory legislation.

In particular I object to mandatory interventions across communities, especially those that involve income management regardless of an individual's or a community's demonstrated capacity to be self-managing. This is not applied to non-Indigenous people in similar circumstances in the Northern Territory and I believe it is inherently racist.

It is also doubtful that mandatory top-down one-size-fits-all solutions are effective. The consultation report itself says that those Aboriginal people consulted said they "they wanted to take more responsibility for their lives and communities". Mandatory actions are actually dis-engaging, particularly where people who have been learning to manage quite well feel humiliated by being labelled as incapable and at worst, rapists and child abusers.

Every community has its own mix of challenges and capacities and the most effective ways of implementing change will always be known better by its own inhabitants than by others. While there is clear general agreement about WHAT needs to be achieved for Indigenous people across the Northern Territory generally (and I support those goals too), this does not mean the same WHAT and HOW recipe should be applied equally across the board. In my view, a more respectful and effective mechanism would be a negotiated package of interventions at community level, developed by patient and respectful negotiations between individual communities and the Australian Government.

Please reconsider this legislation and design a program that treats Aboriginal communities as respectfully as non-Indigenous Australians are treated.

Thank you

Sarah Ryan